



**Thinking for yourself in a large group**

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## Outline

- **Why are we trying to develop independent thinking/ research skills?**
- **Why do we need to consider how to develop the skills?**
- **The current approach to the task**
- **Future developments for teaching research skills**



# Why do we need to develop these skills? [1]

- fundamental skills for learning and understanding
  - life skills
  - employability
- '...it certainly cannot be considered satisfactory to produce graduates who are unable to find fulfilling and rewarding careers'*

Bleasdale, 1977



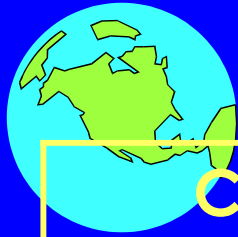
# Why do we need to develop these skills? [II]

- **Prior experience in school**
  - 14.6% no field work ever
  - 83% never given talk in class
  - 60% never carried out individual project
  - only 2.8% used small group work very often



# Why do we need explore ways to develop these skills?

- **failure of transfer of ‘learning’ to other situations**
- **increasing numbers – individual support virtually impossible to sustain**



# Dimensions of participation

<b>Closed</b>	<b>Framed</b>	<b>Negotiated</b>
<b>Teacher controls knowledge construction by making all decisions about data, activities and conclusions</b>	<b>Students inducted into ways in which geo. knowledge is constructed, made aware of choices, encouraged to be critical</b>	<b>Students enabled, with guidance, to investigate questions of personal interest and to evaluate their work critically</b>



# General guidance for the project

- The aim of this project is to investigate the geographical aspects of leisure [i.e. not paid employment or study] activities. This may focus on the activities of group members, or on one particular activity or text analysis (images, articles, photographs) of an activity. It could relate, for example, to a sport which one member plays (but which is of general interest to the group), to shopping or club/pub related activities. Whatever you chose to explore, maximum credit will only be obtained for a project which has a clear focus on the geography of the topic.



# Stages in the research process: I

- **Step 1: identifying the actual topic**
- **Step 2: deciding on the methods to investigate the topic**
- **Step 3: data collection**
- **Step 4: analyse data, reach conclusions, etc.**



## **Step 5: prepare report [poster and oral]**

- **POSTER ASSESSMENT**

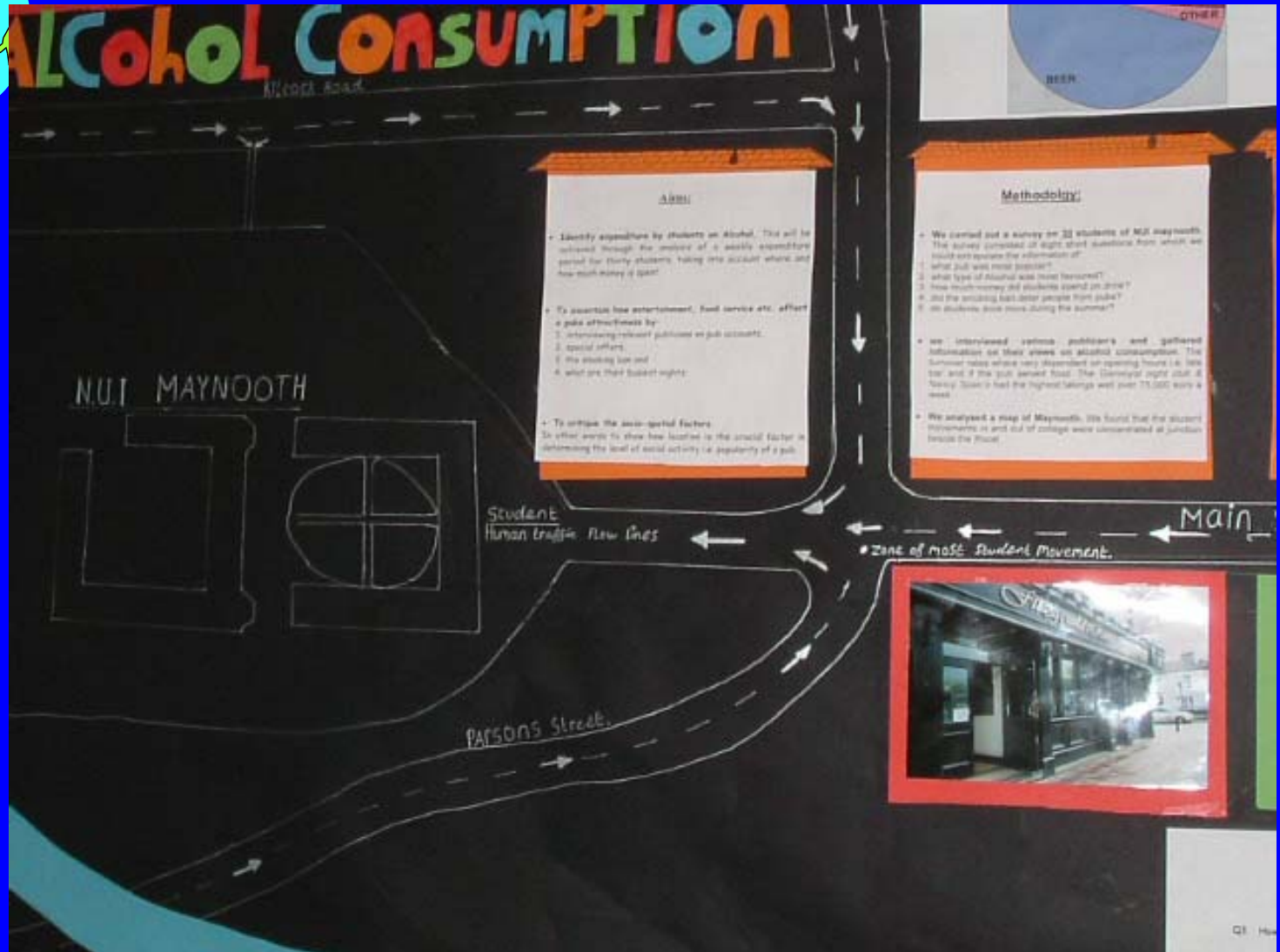
**What did you like?**

**What worked to achieve purpose?**

**What failed?**

**Think carefully about the reasons behind your assessments**

# Step 6: presentation of the project



# A Study of Places to Eat in Maynooth



Map of Maynooth showing various locations and landmarks.

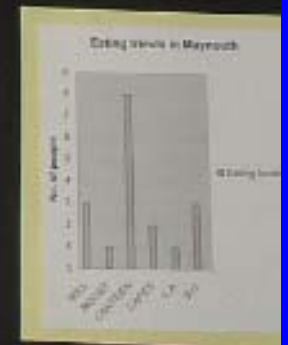


**Method of survey**

A description of the findings of the survey is given in the report in Figure 1. The data shows that there is a wide variety of places to eat in Maynooth. The most popular places to eat are the 'New Hong Kong Chinese Restaurant' and 'Maximus'. The survey also found that there is a wide variety of places to eat in Maynooth. The most popular places to eat are the 'New Hong Kong Chinese Restaurant' and 'Maximus'.

**Results**

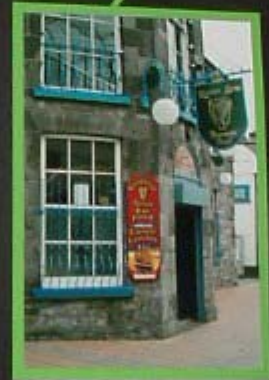
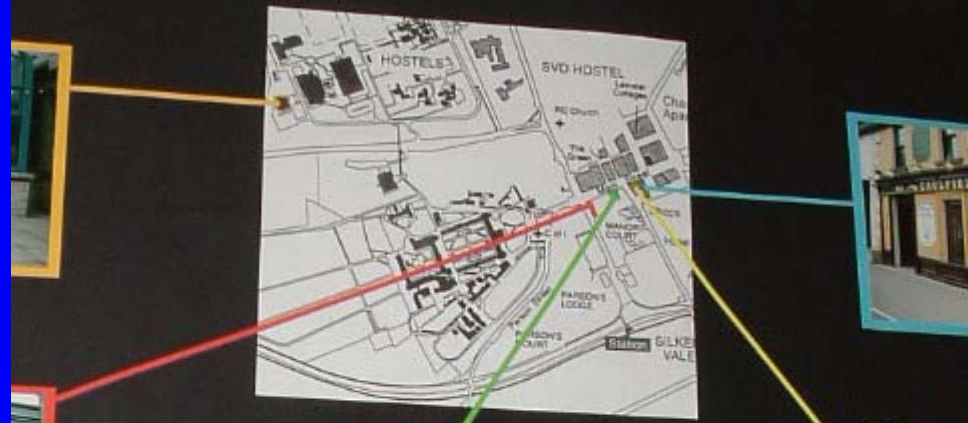
The results of the survey are given in the report in Figure 2. The data shows that there is a wide variety of places to eat in Maynooth. The most popular places to eat are the 'New Hong Kong Chinese Restaurant' and 'Maximus'.



Map of Maynooth showing various locations and landmarks.

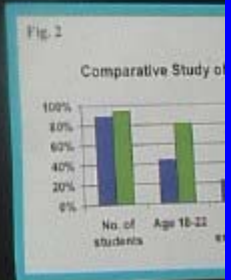
Map of Maynooth showing various locations and landmarks.

# Music Venues in Maynooth

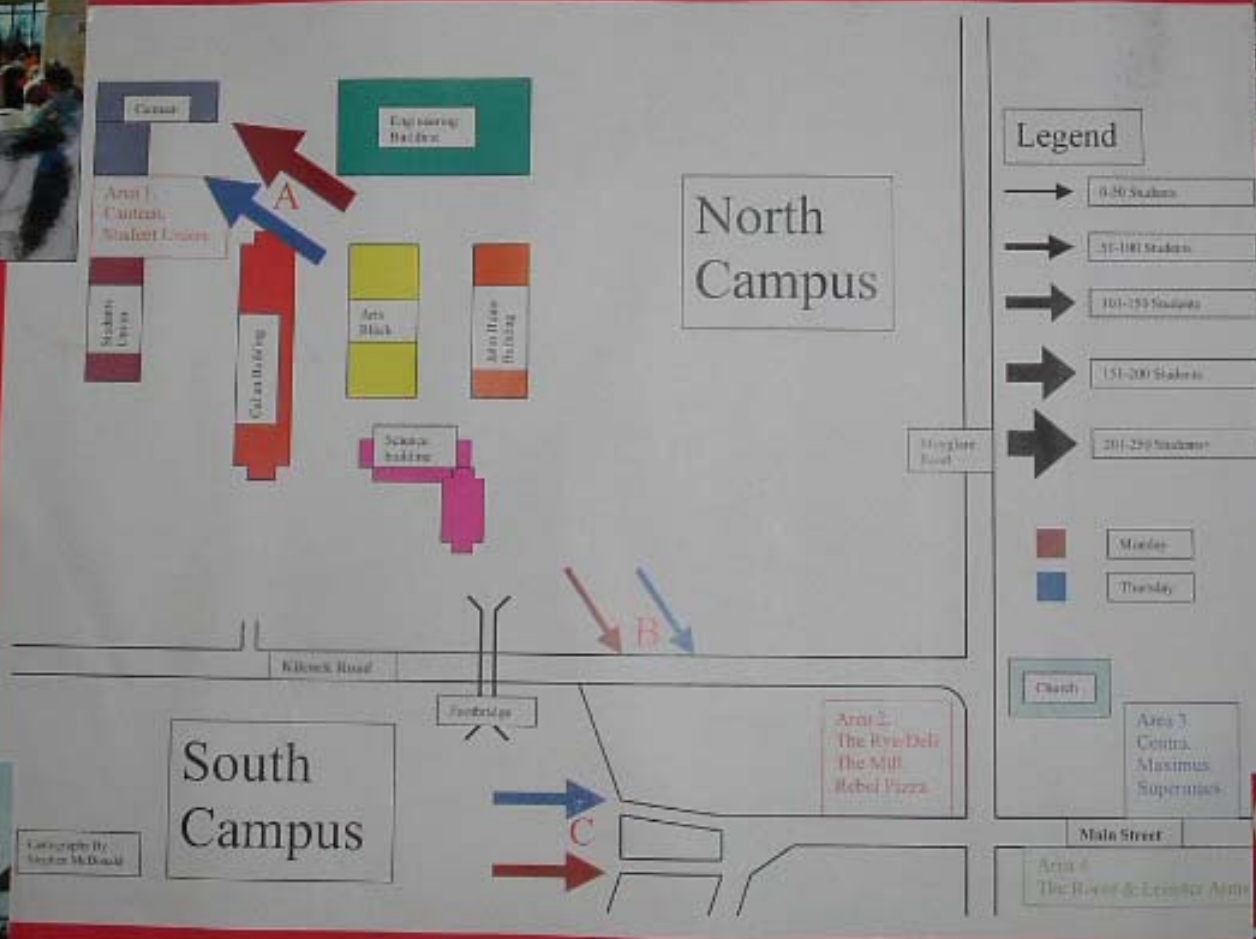


**Comparative Results of Live Music Venues**

	Freq. of Gigs (days)	Cover Charge €	Music Genre	Capacity
Brady's	7 p/w	0.00	Trad.	450
Caulfields	1 p/w	0.00	Folk	200
Leinster Arms	3 p/w	0.00	Rock	750
The Roost	2 p/w	3.00	Rock	1500
The Venue	2 p/w	5.00	Rock	900



WE TRIED TO GAUGE THE SATISFACTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS REGARDING THE QUALITY AND SERVICE OF THE FOOD.



Cartography by Andrew McDonald



## **Step 7: Assessment and evaluation**

- **Lecturer and demonstrators**
- **Peer assessment**
  - **Best in terms of presentation**
  - **Best in terms of content**
- **Evaluation of learning/ reflection**
  - **Skills developed**
  - **Reflection on experience**



## Outcomes

- groups did prove able to carry out work [improved confidence]
- improved performance [because interested in topic?]
- better standard of work
- more interesting topics for assessors
- some evidence of carryover to 3<sup>rd</sup> year projects/ theses



## Student recognition of skills developed

<b>Skill area</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>ICT</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Team work</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>97%</b>
<b>Written</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>Oral</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>Research planning</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>94%</b>
<b>Data collection</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>Data analysis/ synthesis</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Reaching conclusions</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>158</b>



## Reflection on the project

- 1. The most important thing I learned from the experience of carrying out this project with a group of my fellow students was:
- 2. The most enjoyable aspect of carrying out my group project was:
- 3. The least enjoyable aspect of carrying out my group project was:
- 4. A piece of advice I would give to someone starting a similar project is:
- 5. Please make any additional [helpful] comments about how the project could be improved for students next year.



## Reflection [initial findings]

- **Teamwork/ sharing equally**
- **Start early/ plan in advance**
- **Preparation**
- **Practice**
- **Research well**
- **Relax**



## Where in the future?

- **Reflection/ debriefing**
- **Considering further structure in terms of encouraging review/ reflection during process**
- **Greater freedom of choice**